

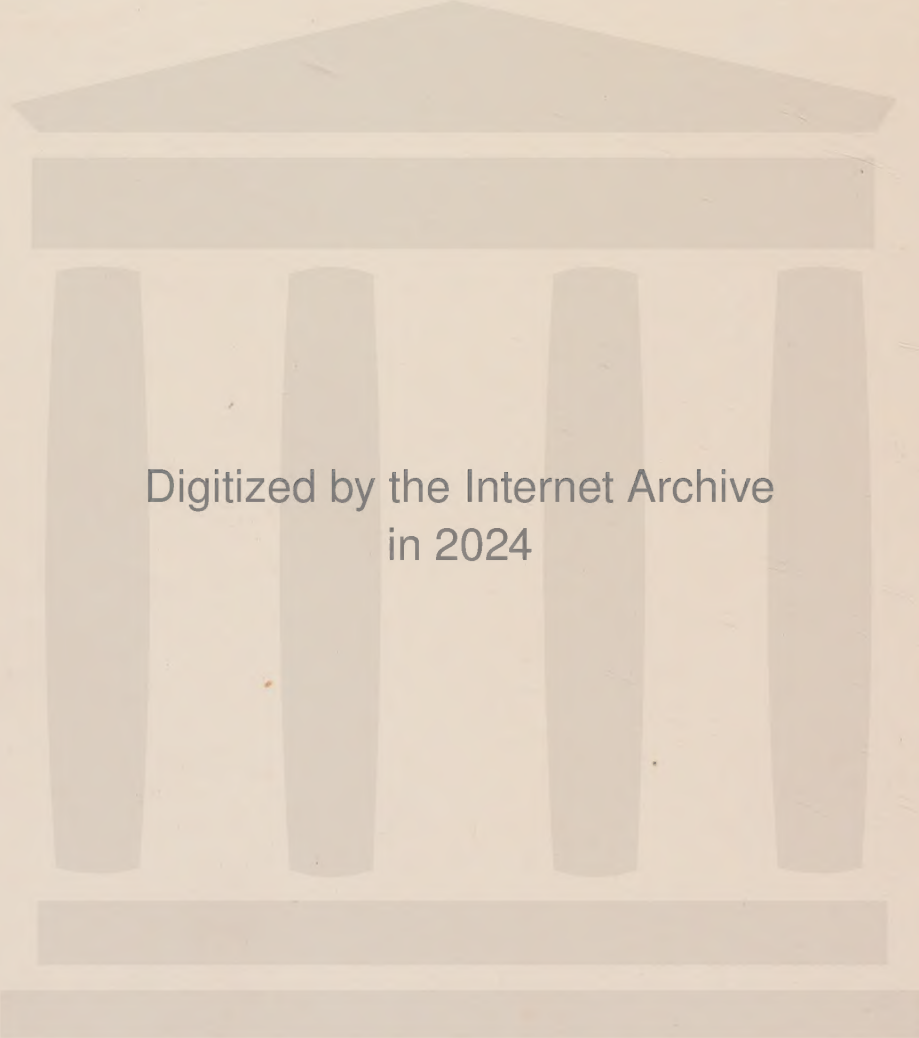
A HANDFUL OF LEATHER

By WILL H. OGILVIE

ILLUSTRATED BY

LIONEL EDWARDS





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024

<https://archive.org/details/handfulofleather0000unse>

17 133-00  
Worn on  
bottom of Spine





THE Author acknowledges with many thanks permission from the Proprietors of *Punch*, and the Editors of *The Field*, *Country Life*, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, *The Tatler*, *The By-stander*, and *The Scottish Field*, to reproduce in this book verses which first appeared in their columns.



**A HANDFUL OF LEATHER**

*BOOKS ILLUSTRATED BY  
LIONEL EDWARDS*

GALLOPING SHOES

By WILL H. OGILVIE.

SCATTERED SCARLET

By WILL H. OGILVIE.

OVER THE GRASS

By WILL H. OGILVIE.

SPORTING VERSE

By ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.

SPORTING SONGS AND VERSES

By G. J. WHYTE-MELVILLE.

HUNTING SONGS

By EGERTON WARBURTON.

HUNTING THE FOX

By LORD WILLOUGHBY DE BROKE.

*\* \* Issued in cloth and leather.*

LONDON: CONSTABLE AND CO. LTD.









NO ROAR OF RACING ENGINES CAN DROWN THOSE HOOFS AND WHEELS ;  
THE FURTHER FLING YOUR HEADLIGHTS THE MORE THEIR RAY REVEALS  
THOSE STRAINING, LIFTING SHOULDERS, THOSE FORWARD POINTING EARS  
OF GHOSTS THAT HOLD FOR EVER THE HIGHWAY OF THE YEARS.

( 'GHOSTS.' )



# A HANDFUL OF LEATHER

BY

WILL H. OGILVIE

ILLUSTRATED BY

LIONEL EDWARDS

LONDON

CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD.

1928



Printed in Great Britain by T. and A. CONSTABLE LTD.  
at the University Press, Edinburgh

*There's never a bird on the heather,  
There's never a stag in the pass,  
That can hold a man's heart in a tether,  
Like a horse and a handful of leather,  
When twenty-two couple together  
Are chiming away on the grass.*

W. H. O.





# CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>INTRODUCTORY VERSE</i> . . . . .	vii
THE HORN . . . . .	I
THE CAPTAINS . . . . .	3
BIDDY, BE KIND! . . . . .	7
A WISH . . . . .	9
THE PILOT . . . . .	10
RED RIBBON . . . . .	12
THE HORSE OF YOUR HEART . . . . .	13
A FOX OUT OF SEASON . . . . .	16
OVER THE BROOK . . . . .	20
THE TRINITY BEAGLES IN NORTHUMBERLAND . . . . .	22
UNDERGROUND . . . . .	25
THE HAPPIEST MAN IN ENGLAND . . . . .	27
LANYARD . . . . .	31
THE DEVIL ON SKATES . . . . .	33
THE MAN ON FOOT . . . . .	37
BRIDLE HAND . . . . .	39
APRIL GORSE . . . . .	40
HOUNDS . . . . .	42
OUR HERITAGE . . . . .	44
ONCE WE WENT GAILY . . . . .	46

	PAGE
STEEPLECHASERS . . . . .	48
CLYDESDALES . . . . .	50
THE GOAL-FINDERS . . . . .	52
THE KESWICK DRIVER . . . . .	54
THE GREY . . . . .	58
OLYMPIA . . . . .	60
THE ROAD TO SCOTLAND . . . . .	62
TO A BRACE OF SETTERS . . . . .	64
THE LARIAT . . . . .	66
WHITE HATS . . . . .	68
ALL THE RUNNING . . . . .	70
LOYAL HEART'S TAIL . . . . .	74
AUSTRALIA . . . . .	76
CORINTHIANS . . . . .	78
GHOSTS . . . . .	80
COUNTESS FOR JIM! . . . . .	82
THE OPEN DITCH . . . . .	85
PONIES FOR ISLINGTON . . . . .	91
IDLE BARS . . . . .	95

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

No roar of racing engines can drown those hoofs     *Frontispiece*  
and wheels ;

The further fling your headlights the more their ray  
reveals

Those straining, lifting shoulders, those forward  
pointing ears

Of ghosts that hold for ever the highway of the years.  
‘ GHOSTS.’

He liked a country strongly fenced     *face p. 3*  
And a solid pace when the play commenced ;  
‘ THE CAPTAINS.’

And give me that best of bounties :     *face p. 9*  
A gleam of November sun,  
The far-spread English counties,  
And a stout red fox to run.  
‘ A WISH.’

And all is silent where of late     *face p. 40*  
The eager hounds gave tongue.  
‘ APRIL GORSE.’

As they drive their ‘chasers crashing     *face p. 48*  
Through the fence-tops, irons clashing.  
‘ STEEPLECHASERS.’



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Flowers and light and music ; Thud of horses' hoofs ;	<i>face p.</i> 60
	'OLYMPIA.'
A few brave gentlemen putting back the clock, A few gallant gentlemen bent on making mock Of the grim old tyrant, Time.	<i>face p.</i> 68
	'WHITE HATS.'
But Jim would ride anything lapped in a hide.	<i>face p.</i> 82
	'COUNTESS FOR JIM.'

## THE HORN

‘ THERE ’s the Horn ! ’ says England, and stands  
entranced and listening ;

November leaves are falling in a flame of gold and  
red ;

The berries hang like jewels and the long wet roads  
are glistening,

And the Horn makes sudden music over Autumn  
doomed and dead.

‘ There ’s the Horn ! ’ says England, and forgets her  
cares and sorrows,

And hastens to the hill-top where the merry music  
plays.

Joy is in the woods to-day and Fate may keep the  
morrrows,

‘ There ’s the Horn ! ’ and ‘ There ’s the Horn ! ’  
and ‘ Hurry ! ’ England says.

First the gentle hint of it, tentative, appealing,  
That hovers on the headlands and rings along the  
rides ;  
Then the full-toned blast of it that sets the round  
world reeling,  
And calls two hundred horsemen to follow where  
it guides.

Far away and far away the distant Horn is blowing,  
The chasing, chiming beauties are a cloud against  
the cloud ;  
Waves of white and scarlet down the open fields are  
flowing,  
And through the heart of England the Horn is  
lifting loud.







HE LIKED A COUNTRY STRONGLY FENCED  
AND A SOLID PACE WHEN THE PLAY COMMENCED ;

(*'THE CAPTAINS.'*)

## THE CAPTAINS

ONE was a Lancer, long of limb,  
And it took a good 'un to ride with him ;  
The other a Guardsman, extra bold,  
He liked a horse that would take a hold ;  
He liked a country strongly fenced  
And a solid pace when the play commenced ;  
With a travelling fox and a serving scent  
There were few could follow the way he went.

Many a run did these heroes see,  
Riding it jealously knee to knee ;  
Many a fence did they cross together  
With a touch of steel and a scrape of leather ;  
Many a time did the Lancer land  
With the Guardsman's whip on his bridle hand ;  
Many a time was the air turned blue  
By the curses flying between the two.



The fields had been gripped in a four weeks' frost,  
The best of the season was over and lost,  
When the country woke to a welcome thaw  
And horses could gallop and hounds could draw,  
And spoiling for work the Captains came  
With an added zest for their favourite game,  
Cantering up through the spattering mud,  
Chaffing each other and out for blood.

Scarcely had hounds o'er the fence-top flung  
When a wise old bitch in the whins gave tongue ;  
The huntsman cheered her ; another spoke ;  
The sterns in a green world waved like smoke.  
The Lancer swung through the bridle gate,  
The Guardsman roared at him : ' D—n you, wait !'  
Then, as he heard the ' Gone away !'  
Rammed the spurs in his plunging bay.

The Master shouted a vain reproof,  
A clod of dirt from the blood one's hoof  
Plastered his mouth, and before he had cursed  
They were both of them off, with the Lancer first.

As huntsman and hounds poured out of the whin  
Stirrup to stirrup the two cut in ;  
And over the vale strung out the chase  
With the Captains sharing the foremost place.

Both were over the first fence well,  
The Guardsman muttering, ' What the hell  
Is the use of gettin' in front of hounds ? '  
And the Lancer shouting, ' A thousand pounds  
Wouldn't buy this steeplechase horse of mine,  
And, d—n your eyes, will you keep your line ! '  
And the Guardsman crammed on extra speed  
And bumped his rival and took the lead.

The Lancer swayed, but he kept on deck,  
And they raced up the pasture neck to neck ;  
The grey horse snatched and the bay took hold,  
And they lashed at a bullfinch, jumping bold ;  
The Guardsman broke through the boughs a track,  
And the Lancer swore as the twigs swung back,  
And the bay drew out and forged ahead  
And over the furrows the Guardsman led.

The bay horse steadied and cocked an ear  
As a hedge and a yawning ditch drew near ;  
As he rose at the jump the bank gave way  
And into the water he slipped and lay.  
His rider, wet to the waistcoat, stood  
And cursed as a cut-away Captain should,  
While over his head the Lancer flew,  
Shouting, ' An excellent place for you ! '

And that was the end of Lance *v.* Sword,  
For each attained to his just reward  
By duly wedding a charming wife  
Who would not allow him to risk his life ;  
And now you may watch those two to-day  
Meet at a gate, with a fox away,  
And see them bowing each other through,  
And hear them murmuring, ' After you ! '

## BIDDY, BE KIND !

Now what do you want to be playing about for,

Reefing and reaching your head for the bit ?

This is the gentlest of canters you 're out for,

And neither yourself nor your rider is fit ;

I, who have lazed

While the summer sun blazed,

At ease in a hammock with cool things to drink ;

You, late a rover

In cocksfoot and clover,

With mud on your mane-locks and loose shoes

a-clink.

This is too soon to be prancing and sidling ;

The elm is still green and the ditches are blind ;

The sun is still strong and suggestive of idling—

So, Biddy, be kind !

Time and enough when they 're drawing the gorses  
To put up your back with those ominous squeals,  
To plunge when they pass you on cantering horses,  
To flaunt your red ribbon and fling up your heels.  
Slippy and tarred  
Is the highway, and hard ;  
A fall is the last thing on earth I desire ;  
By all means be sprightly,  
But do it politely  
With not too much fervour and not too much fire.  
The season 's too young yet for trying a tussle ;  
Rough-riding at present is not to my mind ;  
Just wait a few weeks till we work up our muscle—  
Come, Biddy, be kind !







AND GIVE ME THE BEST OF BOUNTIES,  
A GLEAM OF NOVEMBER SUN,  
THE FAR-SPREAD ENGLISH COUNTRY,  
AND A STOUT RED FOX TO HUNT.

(L. B. D. 1887)

## A WISH

O, FAME is a fading story  
And gold a glitter of lies,  
But speed is an endless glory  
And health is a lasting prize ;  
And the swing of a blood horse striding  
On turf elastic and sound  
Is joy secure and abiding  
And kingship sceptered and crowned.

So give me the brave wind blowing,  
The open fields and free,  
The tide of the scarlet flowing,  
And a good horse under me ;  
And give me that best of bounties :  
A gleam of November sun,  
The far-spread English counties,  
And a stout red fox to run.

## THE PILOT

TIME was when the sportsman, with chivalrous care,  
Would find a safe line for his follower fair,  
And clearing the double stiff-planted and strong  
Would turn in his saddle to cheer her along.

But now we 've for pilot a damsel astride  
On a stud-book and blood one, determined to ride,  
With an eye for a country and vowed to the van ;  
And the slow ones may keep her in sight if they can.

As she lashes along in the wake of the pack  
Not a man need expect her to pause or look back,  
And the laggards who ride on her resolute trail  
Need not wait for her cheer over bullfinch or rail.

To those who may follow not hers to give heed  
So long as no rival shall challenge her lead !  
If she levels a gap, if she smashes a bar,  
They may take it or leave it, whoever they are.

As she rips at her fences our ears she may shock  
With the ' D—n you, come up ! ' of the steeplechase  
jock ;

Should we choose her picked panel, avoiding a worse,  
We may find ourselves warned with a suitable curse.

Yet later, at tea, she 's all glamour and charm,  
Low-voiced, with a laughter and smile that disarm ;  
And, witch'd by her grace, we forget what we heard,  
While we only remember *she went like a bird.*



## RED RIBBON

SHE is slim, she is fair,  
She wears a red ribbon,  
A bow in her bonny brown hair ;  
She might have worn blue  
Or she might have worn white,  
Either one of the two  
Would have suited her quite,  
But she wears a red ribbon,  
A bow in her bonny brown hair.  
She is fair, she is slim,  
She wears a red ribbon  
That makes her look modest and trim,  
But take care !  
Her ears are laid level,  
She kicks like the devil,  
Red ribbon ! Red ribbon ! Beware !

## THE HORSE OF YOUR HEART

WHEN you 've ridden a four-year-old half of the day  
And, foam to the fetlock, they lead him away,  
With a sigh of contentment you watch him depart  
While you tighten the girths on the horse of your heart.

There is something between you that both understand  
As it thrills an old message from bit-bar to hand.  
As he changes his feet in that plunge of desire  
To the thud of his hoofs all your courage takes fire.

When an afternoon fox is away, when begins  
The rush down the headland that edges the whins,  
When you challenge the Field, making sure of a  
start,  
Would you ask any horse but this horse of your  
heart ?

There 's the rasping big double a green one would  
shirk,

But the old fellow knows it as part of his work ;  
He has shortened his stride, he has measured the  
task,

He is up, on, and over as clean as you 'd ask.

There 's the water before you—no novice's test,  
But a jump to try deeply the boldest and best ;  
Just a tug at the leather, a lift of the ear,  
And the old horse is over it—twenty foot clear.

There is four foot of wall and a take-off in plough,  
And you 're glad you are riding no tenderfoot now  
But a seasoned campaigner, a master of art,  
The perfect performer—the horse of your heart.

For here 's where the raw one will falter and  
baulk,

And here 's where the tyro is pulled to a walk,  
But the horse of your heart never dwells or demurs  
And is over the top to a touch of the spurs.



To you who ride young ones half-schooled and half-broke,

What joy to find freedom a while from your yoke !

What bliss to be launched with the luck of the start

On the old one, the proved one, the horse of your heart !

## A FOX OUT OF SEASON

THE gold was on all the gorses, the birds were in all  
the bowers,

The hacks and the hunting horses were nibbling the  
clover flowers,

The banks were feathered with fennel, the ragged-  
robin was spun,

The Pytchley, the Quorn and the Meynell had finished  
their final run,

And the hounds were singing in kennel, the dirge of  
a season done ;

The sun was a golden guinea flung down on a painted  
floor,

When an old fox came from the spinney and sat at  
the Master's door.

A season is always a season, as the Master was well  
aware ;

To hunt in the summer is treason and more than a  
man should dare ;

But a heart that is still pulsating to the chime of a  
    hunting day  
Prevails, in despite of dating, over rules that the rest  
    obey,  
And why should a fox sit waiting on your step at the  
    end of May ?  
No doubt you will blame the Master, but what is a  
    Master for ?  
And the dog-fox courts disaster that comes to a  
    Master's door.

More favoured than Mother Hubbard in quest of the  
    famous bone,  
He found his boots in the cupboard, and the horn he  
    had lately blown.  
Old Cobber came up to the railing to a treacherous  
    crust of bread,  
With a thorn in his long tail trailing he saddled him  
    under the shed,  
And he said, ' When we once get sailing we 'll settle  
    that thief in red ! '

And the hounds from the yard came streaming with  
hackles erect for war,  
And away went the whole pack screaming on a line  
from the Master's door.

They picked it up on the gravel, they held it over the  
drive ;

And how did those beauties travel, and how did those  
dapples dive !

With the rhododendron flinging her bloom as they  
blundered through,

With the blackbird's nest set swinging as they  
shouldered under the yew,

With a thrush on the lime-tree singing, ye gods, but  
they fairly flew !

And, sinking the spurs in Cobber, their lonely follower  
swore :—

‘ I'll teach that son of a robber to sit at a Master's door !’

They raced him over the clover, they killed him out  
in the hay,

That mad, misguided rover that called at the close  
of May ;



And the heads of the hounds were drooping, and  
Cobber was black with sweat,

And the end was a wild who-whooping ; and the  
Master blushes yet

When he thinks how the folk came trooping to ask  
where the hounds had met.

A season, of course, is a season, but what is a Master  
for ?

And a fox is beyond all reason, that waits at a  
Master's door.

## OVER THE BROOK

SOFT shadows glossing it,  
Wind-flutters tossing it,  
Leading hounds crossing it  
    True to the book ;  
So far you 've gone with them,  
So far you 've shone with them ;  
Ride, and be on with them  
    Over the brook !

Chorusing gay with it,  
Making full play with it,  
See, they 're away with it—  
    Tied to it—look !  
Over go three with them,  
Sharing their glee with them ;  
Ride, if you 'd be with them  
    Over the brook !

Venture a throw for it !  
Steel heart and go for it !  
He 'll get you over it,  
    Hook or by crook !  
Shake up old Shadowland,  
Grip your good saddle, and  
You 're on the lad 'll land  
    Over the brook !

Fear not the blink of it  
Under the brink of it—  
Less that you think of it  
    Less will it look ;  
Now, steeplechase at it !  
Cram on the pace at it !  
Sit down and race at it !—  
    *OVER* !—the brook.

THE TRINITY BEAGLES IN  
NORTHUMBERLAND

THE moors of North Northumberland lie naked as  
can be,  
The wind from Coquet Island rolls the sea-mist off  
the sea,  
And where the staid black-faces feed slowly o'er the  
steep  
The bonny little beagles have waked the wold from  
sleep ;  
    Tumbling to the line of it, tossing back their glee,  
Hicks-Beach hunting them and Maldon turning,  
Scent over Rimside breast-high and burning,  
All the merry chime of them sounding to the sea.

The hares of North Northumberland are stout and  
swift of flight,  
But the little Cambridge beauties are the pack to run  
them right,

And never point too far for them and never ring too  
wide,

And once upon the line of her they will not be denied ;  
Flinging o'er the bent-grass, threading through  
the fern,

Flashing o'er the marshy land before us,  
Great Ryle or Reavely ringing to the chorus  
And a tired Field praying for a turn.

The men of North Northumberland, they love the  
hunting horn ;

The girls of North Northumberland are runners bred  
and born ;

From far and near they gather, every man and woman  
sure

There 'll be sport at Bridge of Alen when the beagles  
take the moor ;

Sport to keep and dream again, picturing the  
scene ;

Field that struggles gallantly, every maid and man  
of 'em ;



24 BEAGLES IN NORTHUMBERLAND

Hounds that flash and flicker, white and black and  
tan of 'em,  
Screaming over Bolton or across the Swarland  
Dene.

So, here 's from North Northumberland to sportsmen  
down the line !

We 'll drink it in the golden brew beloved beyond the  
Tyne.

Long life to sporting Trinity and long may she  
provide

The music of her gallant pack to rouse the Coquet  
side !—

Bring 'em back to Hartside, we shall meet you  
there,

See the shy black-faces gather in the grass,

Watch the bracken waving and hear old ' Jewess '   
pass

Telling half Northumberland the way to hunt  
a hare !

## UNDERGROUND

OUT in the open the hounds are the boys !  
They race him and chase him with plenty of noise,  
But when he goes under in earth or in scree,  
Their heads are soon lifted ; they 're waiting for me.

In drains and in culverts, 'neath bridges and lades,  
When no one can move him with picks or with spades,  
It 's down with the crowbar, the pole and the pick,  
And ' Here comes the terrier ! In with him, Dick !'

Then down the dark tunnel I dive like a rat,  
Now scraping the earth out, now wallowing flat,  
Till I come on my foeman and glimpse in the dusk  
The flash of his eye and the gleam of his tusk.

With a whimper of hate and a mutter of rage  
I crouch for an instant, then leap and engage ;  
The tunnel resounds to my challenge of war  
As we grapple and grip between roofing and floor.

Grim fighting for life with his back to the wall,  
He reaches above me, lean, limber and tall ;  
The slashing white ivory bared of its lip  
Lays open my shoulder ; I feel the blood drip.

The pride of my fathers comes swift to my aid—  
That long line of fighters, dead game, unafraid ;  
In dust and in darkness, slashed, bloodied and scarred,  
I leap for the throat and strike deep and strike hard.

With weight to my lightness he flings me away,  
And over me leaps to the glimmer of day ;  
As I creep to the entrance, hard fighting for breath,  
I hear the wild worry that signals his death.

As they tear him and eat him but slight is my share—  
A strip of wet skin and a mouthful of hair ;  
But I ask no reward for the tussle I 've had  
Save your '*Game as a pebble !*' and '*Good little lad !*'

## THE HAPPIEST MAN IN ENGLAND

THE happiest man in England rose an hour before  
the dawn ;

The stars were in the purple and the dew was on the  
lawn ;

He sang from bed to bathroom—he could only sing  
‘ John Peel ’ ;

He donned his boots and breeches and he buckled on  
his steel.

He chose his brightest waistcoat and his stock with  
care he tied,

Though scarce a soul would see him in his early  
morning ride.

He hurried to the stable through the dim light of the  
stars,

And there his good horse waited, clicking rings and  
bridle-bars.

28 THE HAPPIEST MAN IN ENGLAND

The happiest man in England took a grey lock in his  
hand

And settled in his saddle like a seagull on the  
sand.

Then from the shadowy kennel all the eager pack  
outpoured,

And the happiest man in England saw them scatter  
on the sward.

He trotted through the beeches long before the east  
was red,

Then he turned across the pasture and he gave the  
grey his head ;

And the hounds swept on beside him in a merry  
mottled crowd,

And he blew them down the valley with a horn-blast,  
good and loud.

The happiest man in England turned down the stony  
lane,

The heart of him was singing as he heard the hoofs  
again ;



And where the blind ditch narrows and the deep-  
set gorse begins

He waved his pack to covert, and he cheered them  
through the whins.

He heard old Gladsome whimper, then Merryman  
give tongue ;

He saw the green gorse shaking as the whole pack  
checked and swung ;

Then through the ditch came creeping a shy cub  
lithe and lean,

And nothing but a cocked grey ear betrayed that he  
was seen.

But once beyond the brambles and across the heath  
and clear

With half a league of open ground and not a whinbush  
near,

The happiest man in England blew the freedom of  
the pass,

And two-and-twenty couple backed his music on the  
grass.

. . . . .

30 THE HAPPIEST MAN IN ENGLAND

He holds no brief for slaughter, but the cubs must  
take their chance ;

The weak must first go under that the strong may  
lead the dance ;

And when the grey strides out and shakes the foam-  
flecks from his rings

The happiest man in England would not change his  
place with kings.

## LANYARD

LANYARD came up looking round as a keg,  
Softer than butter and milder than milk,  
Big in the body and rough in the leg ;  
Now to the touch he 's like satin and silk.  
See him step jauntily out of his box,  
Light on his feet, with his head in the air,  
Ready to race when you find him a fox—  
Limber and spare !

First he fed listlessly, missing the green,  
Slobbering over the oats that we gave,  
Dreaming of meadows no more to be seen,  
Dragon-flies floating and willows that wave ;  
Every slow canter would drench him in sweat,  
Foam on his shoulder lay white where it starred ;  
Now he can gallop his miles without fret,  
Plunge and pull hard.

Long he went lazily, sluggish from grass,  
Cutting the daisies and digging his toes,  
Taking no notice of aught that would pass,  
Looking no further than over his nose ;  
Now a far hoof-beat can set him a-dance,  
Now, by the way he takes hold of his bit,  
Lanyard has waked from his long summer trance,  
—Lanyard is fit !

## THE DEVIL ON SKATES

THE crown of the road was hard as steel  
And the fields were powdered white ;  
You could hear the ring of a horse's heel  
And the drone and drum of a dogcart wheel  
As far as a train at night ;  
The stirrup-bars had a chilly feel  
And the wind had a nasty bite.

And nobody else but a lunatic  
Like the Master of Hounds we had  
Would have planned as he played with his  
shaving-stick  
To keep his appointment at Weedon Wick  
And have called the day ' Not bad,'  
With the ground as hard as a frozen brick  
And the mercury dropping like mad.



We slid to the gorse at half-past one  
With the help of a mile of heath,  
And the Master winked at the wintry sun  
With a ' Take it from me, now, hounds will run !'  
But we shivered our coats beneath,  
While the cat-ice cracked like a Gatling gun  
To the click of our chattering teeth.

An old fox broke at the further side  
And drove for the snow-white hill ;  
The Master wheeled, took a ten-foot slide,  
Lifted the mare by her rowelled hide  
A hairsbreadth short of a spill,  
And clattered away down a frozen ride  
With a noise like a threshing-mill.

We caught our nags by the head and steered  
By the ominous rat-tat-tats  
Till the thick of the thorn at last we cleared,  
And there on the moor the hounds appeared  
Going over the ice like cats,  
Where a farmer chap with a frosted beard  
Stood waving the worst of hats.

The Master was out by himself on the moor,  
For the Whip was a trifle late—  
The nag he was riding, by no means sure  
Whether 'twas better to jib or endure  
And better to skulk or skate,  
In the end had adopted a tentative tour  
In the shape of a figure of eight.

The usual rush for a place in the lead  
Was discarded by all for the day,  
And no one appeared in a hurry ; indeed,  
The thrusters who should have been cramming on speed  
Were the first to draw rein and delay,  
And none, if he heard, paid an atom of heed  
To the Master's loud ' For'ard away ! '

Old Taffy-the-Trifler slid out on a pool  
Where he found that the surface would bear—  
The place would have gladdened the heart of a school  
Playing follow-my-leader according to rule—  
And came down with his hoofs in the air ;  
And the ice wasn't soft, as one venturesome fool  
Who remembers it well can declare.

'Twould be vain to attempt to take toll of the tossed  
Where they rolled at the feet of the Fates.  
The language they used has been luckily lost  
As they saw the white country successfully crossed  
(Plus a wall and a couple of gates !)  
By the man who induced us to hunt in a frost  
And then went like a devil on skates.

## THE MAN ON FOOT

SEE, with his hat in his hand

The watcher whose holloa has sped him !—

Yonder 's the genuine brand—

So don't be afraid that *he* 'll head him !

One of the people who *know*,

Requiring no blame or invective—

*That* chap won't cripple the show

Or alter old Reynard's objective !

Yonder 's a lover of sport

Whose heart is away where the fox is,

One of the galloping sort

Though empty are all of his boxes ;

One who can joy with the rest

And conjure a smile for the wearing,

One who can wish you the best

In fun the Fates bar him from sharing.

Too much a man and a friend

To stoop to mere envy or malice,  
Here 's one will drink to the end

The bitterest dregs in the chalice !  
Here 's one will grin as you pass

And wave you a generous greeting,  
Calm, though each hoof on the grass  
Has set the hot heart of him beating !



## BRIDLE HAND

THIS is a black of the rare old sort,  
Deep through the heart and coupled short ;  
One of the kind our sires bestrode  
When they took a jaunt on the Great North Road ;  
One of the type you might have seen  
Carrying double to Gretna Green ;  
The type that a Turpin sat unstirred  
When the roll of the London coach was heard.

Though the holsters never have round him hung,  
Nor a Gretna bride to his pillion clung,  
Though he never trots through the darkened oak,  
Under mid-thigh boots and a riding cloak,  
Or is reined in foam at the old inn door,  
Where the guineas ring on the tap-room floor—  
When the gallopers gather in hunting land  
Where will you beat him, old Bridle Hand ?

## APRIL GORSE

THE spreading gorse is starred with gold,  
And down the trampled ride  
The hoof-marks printed in the mould  
By wandering winds are dried.  
The brambles on the bridle-gate  
In green festoons are hung,  
The vixen watches for her mate,  
On guard beside her young ;  
And all is silent where of late  
The eager hounds gave tongue.

From twig to twig the stone-chat flits  
To chirp his love again,  
And in her mossy arbour sits  
The golden-crested wren.



AND ALL IS SILENT WHERE OF LATE  
THE EAGER HOUNDS GAVE TONGUE.

(APRIL 1896.)



No horn is heard, no echo brings  
The pack's exultant cry ;  
The shaded aisles are quick with wings,  
And blue the open sky ;  
But Memory shakes the bridle-rings  
And Memory's guest am I.

## HOUNDS

THERE is music on disc and on wireless,  
Band-music, dance-tunes for the tireless,  
    Sweet music from day unto day ;  
But the music a man will remember  
Shakes down the last leaves of November,  
And speeds the wild geese in December,  
    And greets the first oak-bud in May.

What string with such beauty can tremble ?  
What bugle such raptures assemble ?  
    What trumpet can sound such a call ?  
Is there ever a melody nearer  
The quick-beating heart of the hearer ?  
Is there ever a tune that is dearer  
    As it chooses a dance for us all ?



No song is so sweet in the setting,  
No lilt so forbids all forgetting  
    Or lingers so long by the way ;  
When the shadows of night gather o'er us,  
And the scarlet has faded before us,  
The ring of that ravishing chorus  
    Dies not with the death of the day.

## OUR HERITAGE

THIS is our heritage ; the far-flung grass,  
The golden stubble and the dark-red moor ;  
Men pass and perish as the swift years pass,  
But wide and wind-swept still the fields endure.

This is our heritage ; the love of sport,  
A fair ambition and a friendly strife,  
The rivalry of farm and camp and court,  
The keen endeavour of a clean, hard life.

The hoofs of horses on the trampled lea,  
The crash and rattle of the broken rail  
Where the first flight ride reckless, knee to knee,  
And bold men face the dangers of the vale.

The cry of hounds, the holloa and the horn ;  
The lean red shadows where the foxes run ;  
To these and all their challenge we were born,  
And these we leave behind us, sire to son.

This is the heritage that none can take,  
The gift we hold, the gift we give again,  
And this the spirit that no Time can break,  
So long as England and her fields remain.

## ONCE WE WENT GAILY

ONCE we went gaily with never a care,  
And the bigger the fences, the bolder we were ;  
Once the wild wind was our spur and our lash,  
Once we would laugh at the splinter and crash  
As the rails broke behind us, and thrill to the call  
Of twelve foot of water or five foot of wall.

Once we could cope with the buckler's demands,  
Once the hard puller came back to our hands ;  
Once the green four-year-old, fretting and free,  
Flinging the foam in white flecks to his knee,  
Bent to our bidding and held us our place,  
O'er the stiffest of country whatever the pace.

To blood running hotly, to hearts beating strong,  
Not the longest of days was a moment too long ;

Till the evening drew over its mantle of stars  
We would ride to the hoof-beat and rattle of bars.  
There was song in the gale, there was kiss in the rain ;  
Ah ! Once we went gaily—but never again !

For the harsh years have stolen that magical zest  
When with confident courage we rode with the best.  
Now swift and unchallenged the braver may pass  
On their reefing blood horses, hard held, on the grass ;  
The nerve is departed, the rapture denied,  
And the chase must be left to the young ones to ride.

## STEEPLECHASERS

TUCKED away in winter quarters,  
Gainsborough's sons and Buchan's daughters,  
Blue of blood, clean-lined and handsome,  
Priced beyond a prince's ransom,  
Where no danger can befall them  
Rest till next year's Classics call them ;  
And the limber lean-of-head ones,  
Hardy, hefty, humble-bred ones,  
Booted, bandaged to the knee,  
Ready for whate'er may be,  
Gallant slaves and cheery martyrs,  
Stand once more before the starters.

Piggotts, Masons, Leaders, Dullers  
Witch the world in mud-splashed colours,





AS TOBY DRIVE THEIR THASERS CRASHING  
DOWN THE STAIRS, DRIVING CRASHING G.

$$d^2h/dt^2 = -g \quad (1)$$



Brushing through the birchwood switches,  
Cramming at the open ditches,  
Grinning when the guard-rails rattle  
In the fore-front of the battle.  
Gordons, Anthonys and Reeses  
Bow their heads against the breezes,  
Hail upon their faces whipping,  
Wet reins through their fingers slipping  
As they drive their 'chasers crashing  
Through the fence-tops, irons clashing.

So they forge through wind and weather  
To the creak of straining leather  
Lashing at the leaps together,  
With the fluttering flags to guide them,  
Taking what the Fates provide them,  
Danger calling, Death beside them.—  
'Tis a game beyond gainsaying  
Made by gods for brave men's playing.

## CLYDESDALES

THE Suffolk Punch will keep the road ;  
The Percheron goes gay ;  
The Shire will lean against his load  
All through the longest day ;  
But where ploughland meets the heather  
And earth from sky divides,  
Through the misty Northern weather,  
Stepping two and two together,  
All fire and feather,  
Come the Clydes !

The Hunter gallops on the lea,  
The Garron treads the ling,  
The Hackney, touching nose and knee,  
Will make the roadway ring ;

But, apart from play and pleasure,  
With the sweat upon their sides,  
Where the furrow is to measure,  
And the earth to turn for treasure,  
Serfs of little leisure,  
Go the Clydes !

To each the favourite of his heart,  
To each his chosen breed,  
In gig and saddle, plough and cart  
To serve his separate need !  
Blue blood for him who races,  
Clean limbs for him who rides,  
But for me the giant graces,  
And the white and honest faces,  
The power upon the traces,  
Of the Clydes !

## THE GOAL-FINDERS

THE ground may jar our shoulders and the bits may  
chafe our jaws,  
The turn may strain our tendons and the gallop  
test our hearts,  
But glad we give our swiftness to the glory of the  
cause,  
And which of us would loiter when the last hard  
chukker starts ?

Our trust is in the master-hand that wheels us to the  
ball,  
Our pride is in the whirling stick that strikes it  
straight and true ;  
Our joy is found in answering that fierce and final  
call  
Which bids us leave the rest behind, race on, and  
take it through.



The glory to our riders as they thread the cheering  
ranks,

For us the utter weariness, the aching loin and  
limb,

The foam upon our shoulders and the sweat upon  
our flanks,

The blood upon our snaffles, and the green ground  
growing dim.

Yet, bridled, girthed and martingaled, and booted to  
the knee,

Each new day finds us fidgeting and reaching for  
the rein ;

No keener are our masters for the winning goal  
than we,

And every time they ask us we shall wheel and  
come again.

## THE KESWICK DRIVER

FROM Keswick Town to Borrowdale  
Beneath the loud Lodore,  
I take my team through Derwent Vale,  
My staunch and dauntless four ;  
By Falcon Crag and Castle Hill  
Their lead-bars lift and swing,  
And stepping with a right good will,  
They make the roadway ring.

By farm and church and lone hotel,  
They thread the narrowing way  
Till, closing inward, peak and fell  
Rise round us gaunt and grey ;  
And up the arduous path they go  
With shoulders collar-strained  
Till, the last larchwood left below,  
The crown at last is gained.

Down the high crag of Honister  
The tinkling slate-stone falls  
From where unseen the quarrier  
Toils on its steep grey walls,  
And circling round the rampart crest  
The great hawks dive and climb  
In that unending mountain quest  
That takes no heed of time.

The shadows on the peaks are blue,  
The rock ravines are black ;  
We sink the hill with chain and ' shoe '  
And collars riding slack,  
Till safely through the out-crop slate  
The team with jingling gear  
Takes up the road by bank and gate  
That leads to Buttermere.

Watered and rested, groomed and fed,  
Once more with straining bars  
They face the winding steeps ahead  
As though to climb the stars.

Once more the high tops left and right,  
Once more the mists of blue,  
Once more the pause upon the height,  
Once more the chain and shoe !

And so we pass the hills of charm  
That slope on either hand,  
And, swinging down by field and farm,  
Come back to planted land ;  
And through the shades of Portinscale,  
By Greta's guiding stream,  
The children on the pathway hail  
My tired, head-tossing team.

But they 've a pride to hold and keep  
And they 've a trust to bear ;  
The road was long, the passes steep,  
But each has pulled his share ;  
And now, heads high, with quickened pace,  
Arched necks and lifted knees,  
They thunder through the market-place  
As proudly as you please.

## THE KESWICK DRIVER

57

From Keswick Town to Windermere  
And round the Thirlmere ring,  
From Bassenthwaite to Bowness Pier  
The carburettor's king ;  
But we can climb where engines fail  
And, conquerors of the crest,  
We rule the road from Borrowdale  
To where the brown hawks nest.

## THE GREY

CHESNUTS with socks,  
Browns with a star,  
Follow the fox  
Stoutly and far ;  
But when the horn  
Blows 'em away  
Out of the thorn—  
Give me a grey !

Where the jumps stand  
Close in the ring,  
Small room to land,  
Slight room to swing,  
This is the horse  
Shows 'em the way  
Round the cramped course—  
Give me the grey !



Blue roans and blacks  
Sightly may seem  
When the whip cracks  
Over a team ;  
But for a steed  
Staunch and to stay,  
Wheeler or lead,  
Give me a grey !

Some folk of course  
Will not be bound  
So that the horse  
Serves and is sound ;  
' Colour ? O, blow !  
Rubbish !' they say.—  
Well, I dun'no,  
*Give me a grey !*

## OLYMPIA

WAVE on wave of colour rolling to the roofs ;  
Crowded rank and fashion, tier on endless tier ;  
Flowers and light and music ; thud of horses' hoofs ;  
You that love old England, read her story here !  
All the saddle-mastery, gift of hearts and hands,  
All the skill and courage and endurance that is hers,  
All that gave the triumph to this land among the  
lands  
Wakes again to glory in the gleam of silver spurs.

Here in lordly pageant pose for us and pass  
Blood and bone and beauty, bringing us again  
Music of the foxhounds crossing English grass,  
Thunder of the squadrons of England's fighting  
men.  
Fancy flaunts the colours, whirls the whistling whips ;  
See the lifting fore-arms ! Hear the nostrils crack !  
Crucifix and Bendigo, Ormonde and Eclipse,  
Sceptre and St. Simon, battling up the track !



FLOWERS AND LIGHT AND MUSIC  
THUD OF HORSE-HOOFS;

HOLLYHOCK



Coach-horns blowing ! The least of us can dream  
Inn-lights flashing and the reins flung down ;  
Sweat upon the shoulders of a tired bay team ;  
Four fresh chesnuts to take us into town.  
Still may wait a highwayman underneath the stars,  
Hand upon his holster, where the heath roads cross,  
Listening for the first faint whisper of the bars,  
Watching for the forelocks where the keen heads  
toss.

Ribbons on their bridles, see the victors pass !  
Hunters at the canter, tandems stepping free !  
Cheer them, lord and lady ! Cheer them, lad and  
lass !  
Here 's the soul of England if anything can be !  
Coach-horns blowing and a whinny at the gate,  
Beauty in the boxes and rhythm in the ring ;  
Here within Olympia we stem the tide of fate,  
Here within Olympia the old loves cling.

## THE ROAD TO SCOTLAND

THE royal robes of purple cloak the shoulders of  
the Bens,  
The silver-bosomed birches are a glory in the  
glens,  
But before you win your welcome where the  
high tops wait  
You must make your bow to Cheviot as guardian  
of the gate ;  
For the Highlands may be calling, but it 's Cheviot  
waves you through—  
That old March Warder,  
The Keeper of the Border,  
Who gives you right of riding through the country of  
Buccleuch.  
  
So you may choose the Gretna road and ghosts  
shall be your guides  
Of postboys spurred and booted and of little  
trembling brides ;

Or you may cross by Carter Bar and hear the  
raiding hoofs

Come trampling through the fords of Rede, and  
watch the burning roofs,

And see the smoke in Liddesdale a cloud upon the  
blue,

Where the old March Warder

Is waiting on the Border

To give you right of riding through the country of  
Buccleuch.



## TO A BRACE OF SETTERS

*(Labelled for the North)*

A-STRAIN on your leashes, close coupled together,  
Un-awed by the crowd, you come shouldering  
through  
To carry our hearts with you straight to the heather  
And out to the crag-tops that edge on the blue.  
There sounds in the station a hill-torrent falling,  
And birch-stem and boulder are wet with its spray;  
Ben Lomond 's awake and Schiehallion calling ;  
The peaks are all purple from Orchy to Spey.

There 's a hill-track you 'll climb by the side of the  
keepers  
Before the first dewdrops have dried on the ling,  
While out of the blaeberrries flutter the cheepers,  
And over the ridge go the strong on the wing.

You 'll sniff the clean wind as it crosses the corrie  
With scent of the moor on the breath of it blown,  
And staunchly you 'll stand on the line of your quarry  
As still as the work of some sculptor in stone.

So waves the green flag, and farewell to you, setters !  
What heart but must envy your path to the hills ?  
In gloom we return to our work-a-day fetters,  
Our desks and our duty, our ink and our quills ;  
But night shall bring dreams of your heads in the  
heather  
That surges and swings as you quarter it through ;  
Then a gunshot—an echo—a floating brown feather—  
And so shall we know that *your* dreams have come  
true !

## THE LARIAT

IN the loop of the lariat Freedom has lain  
Since the first wagons wound o'er the buffalo  
plain,

In the curve of it Golden Adventure was born  
When the ranges were ridden and roped to the horn,  
And each coil as it drops on an Oregon steer  
Has behind it the hand of the First Pioneer,  
And the courage and grit of the boldest and best  
'That filled the first saddles when cinched for the  
West.

The loop of the lasso !—In fancy again  
One can smell the hot dust on the hoof-trodden  
plain.

There 's the creak of the leather, the cowboy's ' Yip !  
Yip ! '

The dodging white horns and the zig-zagging hip,

The whirl and the follow, the slack rope out-torn,  
The tug as she tightens, the hitch round the horn—  
Then the jar—then the crumpling swift fall—the  
    long strain—  
And the loop of the lasso has conquered again !

In the lariat's loop lie the colour and zest—  
All the motion and life of the wonderful West ;  
The clatter of hoof and the clashing of horn ;  
The grey of the sage-brush ; the dark of the thorn ;  
The whirl of the dustcloud ; the thrust of the spur ;  
The coloured chaparros ; the canyon ; the fir ;  
The foothills that beckon, the mountains that stoop—  
All the world of the West in the lariat's loop.

## WHITE HATS

THERE are white hats gleaming on the Brighton  
Road,  
There are pole-chains ringing over Richmond  
Hill,  
There 's a high coach running with a trim top-load,  
And a stout team pulling with a will.  
You can hear the chink of harness and the whispering  
of bars  
And the cheery rhythmic hammer of the hoofs,  
Where an artist swings his leaders through the raffle  
of the cars  
And a coach-horn echoes in the roofs.

*Sunlight streaming and the white hats gleaming,  
And the cock-horse ready for the climb ;  
A few brave gentlemen putting back the clock,  
A few gallant gentlemen bent on making mock  
Of the grim old tyrant, Time.*



A FEW BRAVE GENTLEMEN PUTTING BACK THE CLOCK,  
A FEW GALLANT GENTLEMEN BENT ON MAKING MOCK  
OF THE GRIM OLD TYRANT, TIME.

(*"WHITE HATS."*)





The terret-rings are shining where the reins run  
through ;

The coats are like a mirror on the chesnuts and  
the bay—

Leaders stepping daintily and wheelers stepping true,  
And a light hand letting them away ;

Children in the villages that gather round to cheer,  
Women in the doorways at the coach-horn's call,  
Dust above the roller-bolt and foam flying clear,  
And the white hats gleaming over all.

*Grey dust drifting and the lead-bars lifting*

*As the tall coach carries down the street*

*A few brave gentlemen who nurse an ancient pride,*

*A few gallant gentlemen who will not be denied,*

*And an artist on the high box-seat.*

## ALL THE RUNNING

WHAT a buck he gave at the paddock gate !  
And how did the gay crowd banter !  
What a hold he took all down the straight  
As I shook him up in a canter !

At the starting post he was quick as a deer,  
I never saw one that could match him ;  
When the flag went down he was two lengths clear  
And I knew they would never catch him.

Those two good lengths he had changed to four  
Where the first fence crossed the hollow ;  
He topped the twigs by a foot or more  
With the ease of a flying swallow.

Down in the dip he was eight lengths clear,  
You could neither hold nor bind him,  
The hoofs of the rest I could hardly hear  
As they dropped away behind him.

My tired arms ached as he tugged the rein  
In his slashing stride extended ;  
The field strung out in an endless chain  
And the pace was hot and splendid.

Faster and faster still we flew  
And my heart to his hoofs responded ;  
The fence ahead was a fence he knew  
And he knew that gleam beyond it.

The faintest check in his pace, that 's all !  
One heave of his powerful quarter,  
A landing light as the snowflakes fall,  
And we led them over the water.

A roar from the crowd ; the favourite in ;  
And a chilly dip for his rider !  
Then I knew that my chance was good to win  
On this runaway rank outsider !

We charged at the open ditch full sail ;  
He 's a horse in a hundred surely !  
His hot hoofs rattled the stout guard-rail,  
And he shook his head demurely.

A mile to go ; he was tireless still,  
And at each new fence grew bolder ;  
But he slowed a bit as we rose the hill,  
And I glanced across my shoulder.

There was only one of them I could see,  
A man on a bay blood filly ;  
Then Frantic took fresh charge of me,  
And I went with him willy-nilly.

At the final fence she came to his girth  
With the last game effort in her,  
But he drew away as the two touched earth  
And he landed an easy winner.

And it 's always good to ride in a race,  
And to win it is always stunning,  
But the proudest thing is to set the pace  
And make the whole of the running !

## LOYAL HEART'S TAIL

SOFT and silken and grey,  
Waved like the hair of a woman that goes to a ball,  
It hangs on my study wall—  
The only thing that is left me to-day  
Of the dearest comrade of all.

Every beautiful strand  
Brings me a thought I would not willingly miss,  
Brings me a hoof-beat of his,  
As I ride once more through the sunlit land  
That is many a mile from this.

Only a bundle of hair  
Saved from the strength and the beauty, the speed  
and the pride !  
All I have left as a guide  
To the plains where the golden mornings were  
In the days when the world was wide !

Loyal Heart ! King of them all !  
Tireless and eager and swift to the end of the day,  
Comrade in work and in play,  
If but in fancy, come now when I call,  
O, my peerless and resolute grey !

If but a phantom I girth,  
Stand while I mount you, and then let us gallop afar  
Back to our beckoning star,  
Back to the freedom and width of the earth  
And the Bush where our memories are !



## AUSTRALIA

SHE has hidden each footprint of mine  
    With a swirl of her drifting sand ;  
My camp fires leave no sign  
    And nowhere my tent-pegs stand ;  
On her tracks I have left no trace,  
    Yet my heart to her heart shall cling ;  
I shall remember her face  
    To the end of remembering.

I shall remember the plains  
    In the rose-red light of the dawn,  
The tug of the foam-white reins  
    Through our frosted fingers drawn ;  
The creek and the bell-bird's call,  
    And, bush to bush in the sun,  
Spread like a silver shawl,  
    The net that a spider spun.

I shall remember the ways  
    That were glad to our horses' feet,  
The sun-bright, wonderful days,  
    And the starred nights, scented sweet.  
Here in my forebears' place  
    The spells of the old love cling ;  
I shall remember her face  
    To the end of remembering.

## CORINTHIANS

WHEN decked in their caps and their colours,  
The blue, the old gold, or the rose,  
Even Anthonys, Leaders and Dullers  
May find them redoubtable foes.  
Overweight ? They can carry the burden ;  
Overmatched ? They 'll dispute you the  
claim ;  
They are triers, and glory 's their guerdon ;  
They ride for the love of the game.  
  
They may take their full share of reverses,  
But don't for a moment believe  
They are infants escaped from their nurses—  
They have sometimes a bit up their sleeve.  
You may scorn them as doomed to disaster,  
You may mark them for jostle and jest,  
But among them is maybe a master  
Requiring no weight from the best.

They don't sit as loose as they 're thought to,  
And some have sound sensitive hands  
And can ride out a horse as they ought to,  
And lift a tired horse when he lands.  
There are some independent of teachers,  
With lore of their own to impart,  
Who can give you a lead over Becher's  
Or match you at stealing a start.

You may find when the birch-twigs are spinning  
And the guard-rail is rapped by the shoe,  
They are equally bent upon winning,  
And bold in the battle as you,  
Ay, and sometimes a tiny bit bolder  
At a crisis when courage avails,  
So—*never look over your shoulder*  
*When Corinth comes up on the rails !*

## GHOSTS

ON every moonlit roadway, down every starry lane,  
Forgotten hoofs make music, lost wagons creak and  
strain ;

The mantling mist of midnight half hides and half  
reveals

The glitter of pale harness, the curve of shadowy  
wheels.

Below the leafless beeches that fret the frosty sky  
I see the phantoms gather and the grey ghosts go by,  
Where dimly through the darkness proud kings of  
trace and chain

Come back to claim their empire and rule the roads  
again.

I hear the chink of tug-chains that tighten to their  
toil ;

I see the whirling whip-thong unfurl a silver coil ;

When all the fields are silent and all the woods are  
still

I hear the snort of horses with bent heads to the hill.

I hear the rein-links rattle at the trough on the rise,  
I see the thrusting muzzles, the mild contented eyes ;  
And when they back to labour at the beckoning of  
the whips

I see the moonlit water drip silver from their lips.

No roar of racing engines can drown those hoofs and  
wheels ;

The further fling your headlights the more their ray  
reveals

Those straining, lifting shoulders, those forward  
pointing ears

Of ghosts that hold for ever the highway of the years.

## COUNTESS FOR JIM !

LONG ago when we sat on the catching-yard rails  
As the horses were drafted each Saturday morn,  
And watched them ring round with the mud in their  
tails  
And lash in their lightness and snort in their scorn,  
There was one sat among us with bridle in hand,  
With his battered old cabbage-tree ripped at the  
rim,  
Who was calmest of all at the stockman's command :  
*' Countess for Jim ! '*

Some smiled when they heard it, some pitied his fate,  
But Jim, the old hero, turned never a hair  
When Countess the buckler dashed in through the gate  
With a flick of her vicious white heels in the air.





THE OLD WOULD RIDE ANYTHIN LAPPED IN A HIDE.

(COUNTESS FOR THE)



There were raw ones, and rough ones, and hacks of  
the best,

There were savage and soft ones—what matter to  
him

With the bravest of hearts in that dare-devil West !—

*' Countess for Jim ! '*

Bay Countess could buck to the top of the rails

And shake your back teeth till they rattled like dice,  
And the man was a good one and harder than nails

Who, once having tackled her, tackled her twice.  
There were sleepy old nags for the new-chums to ride,  
There were corks for the careful who valued a limb,  
But Jim would ride anything lapped in a hide.—

*' Countess for Jim ! '*

It is far to the stockyards and far down the years

To the days when that shout through the dust-  
wrack was heard,

And it 's long since the bridle was slipped on her ears  
And Jim, the old hero, went up like a bird ;

But whenever Fate frowns or when troubles befall

I pluck up my courage, remembering him

Who crammed down his battered old hat at the call :

*' Countess for Jim ! '*

## THE OPEN DITCH

By the big open ditch we were standing,  
Bob Barton and Archie and I,  
Discussing the take-off and landing,  
And where we would have it and why ;  
And Bob had begun to remind us  
Of the toss he took here on The Toff,  
When we heard a low murmur behind us  
And somebody shouted : ‘ They ’re off ! ’

Far back we could hear the hoofs drumming,  
See caps bobbing over the crowd.  
‘ Look out ! ’ said young Archie. ‘ They ’re  
coming,  
Here ’s Tommy in front on The Cloud ! ’  
Then their silks caught the sunlight, and splendid  
They bore down upon us at speed ;  
In front the old grey, half extended,  
Had four or five lengths of a lead.

We saw the set face of his rider,  
The lift of that resolute chin ;  
Had the wide jump been twenty times wider  
We knew it was ' Over, or in ! '  
And the grey had no thought of refusing,  
As he shortened his galloping stride,  
And, right at the spot we 'd been choosing,  
Stood off it and went for it wide.

Just a little *too* wide—so we doubted—  
For the hedge was a big one to clear,  
And the guard-rail, too stiff to be clouted,  
Had bluffed him from coming too near.  
We heard the hoofs' clattering racket  
As up to the effort they drew ;  
We saw the pale gold of the jacket,  
The cap and cross-sashes of blue.

We heard The Cloud's snort of endeavour  
And Tommy's ' Up, lad ! ' as he rose,  
Courageous, cat-footed and clever ;  
And Bob shouted : ' Over he goes ! '

Then a silence as deep as a church's  
Enveloped our group like a pall.  
*They were short : had struck into the birches—  
Were down—with a deuce of a fall.*

The Cloud scrambled up in a second,  
But Tommy rolled clear of the course  
And lay very still. Barton beckoned :  
‘ He ’s hurt, Will ! Get on to the horse ;  
He ’s hard-trained and game as they make ’em,  
He ’ll stand off and fly them like foam ;  
Be patient, he ’ll soon overtake ’em,  
Then sit down and bustle him home ! ’

And then, as no answer came from me :  
‘ Quick, Arch, leg him up ! That ’s the style !  
Don’t fret ; we ’ll look after old Tommy ;  
You ’ll catch ’em in less than a mile ! ’  
Before me the bright silks were scattered  
As into the sunlight they flew ;  
Behind me lay, splashed and bespattered,  
The gold with the sashes of blue.



Did you ever try riding a steeple  
On a strong-going masterful brute,  
In the everyday garb of the people  
With never a spur or a boot,  
As soft in condition as syrup,  
With a race crowd expressing its glee,  
With a bootlace entwined in your stirrup  
And trousers rucked up to the knee ?

Let me tell you, as one who has tried it,  
It isn't all skittles and beer ;  
But launched in the race you must ride it  
Without hesitation or fear.  
So I braced myself up to the doing  
Of this super-desperate deed,  
And started out, faint but pursuing,  
To lighten the field of its lead.

Their hoofs had a challenge to throw me ;  
The old joy of battle came back ;  
I felt the strong muscles below me,  
I smelt the clean turf of the track ;

And I bent to the breeze's resistance,  
Above the white mane of the grey,  
While in front of us, dim in the distance,  
The colours went glinting away.

I saw through the thin dust upstanding  
A fence. We were over and clear !  
We caught up one rival in landing  
And left him a length in the rear.  
In a moment we flashed by another  
Who flung us some bantering word,  
Then blinded by turf-clods a-smother  
We struck the white heels of a third.

So we chased them and caught them in order  
Till the open ditch, second time round ;  
Phelps leading on Pride of the Border,  
Swain second on Galloping Ground ;  
Then The Cloud, going strongly as ever  
And pulling me out of my seat,  
And close at my knee Now-or-Never,  
And all of the rest of them beat.

Was the old chap a little bit nervous  
As he neared the big fence where he fell ?  
Had I asked him too strenuous service  
And cooked him ?—I never could tell.  
But the hedge of bound birch-boughs he breasted  
Low down by the covering bars,  
And my triumphing ride was arrested  
And I saw

\* \* \* \*

stars !

## PONIES FOR ISLINGTON

PONIES, ponies for Islington ! The patter of eager  
hoofs  
Rings through the London arches and dies in the  
London roofs ;  
Ponies following ponies, hogmaned, clipped and  
dressed,  
Ranelagh's pride and beauty, Hurlingham's picked  
and best.

Lords of the world's gymkhanas, heroes of bending  
fame ;  
Bred to the tireless gallop, made to the perfect game ;  
Mouthed to the lightest handling, ribbed to carry a  
weight,  
Ready to wheel at a whisper, ready to turn on a plate.

Ponies fresh from the cloud-mist on the high green  
hills of Wales,  
Brecon mud on their shoulders, Appynt fern in their  
tails,  
Wild-eyed, wonderful-crested roans and bays and  
greys  
Lone for the Irfon River and the old remembered  
ways.

Ponies up from the Forest, startled and swift and shy,  
Fresh from the glades of Lyndhurst where the watch-  
ful roebuck lie ;  
Foaled in the blackthorn thickets that look to the  
Channel tides ;  
Wild as the hawks that hover over the Beaulieu rides.

Ponies down from the Shetlands, wards of the treeless  
plain,  
Hard as the salted sea breeze, dour as the driving  
rain ;

Tossing their tangled forelocks, nursing an ample  
pride  
In all they have done for England in teaching her  
sons to ride.

Garrons bred where the birches cling to the mountain  
glen,  
Full of the fiery courage they share with the High-  
land men ;  
Yellows and duns and creamies, marked with the  
line of jet—  
The long black line that was never the badge of a bad  
one yet !

Ponies bred on the moorlands above the Exe and  
Dart,  
Threading the crowded traffic with high undaunted  
heart,  
Wisdom that skirts the bog-land, courage that climbs  
the tor,  
Brought from Dunkery Beacon to lead them in  
London's roar.

Hark to the stallions neighing ! Hark to the tramp-  
ling feet !

Beauty bent to the lead-rein sidling along the  
street !—

Tide on the shores of Shetland lashing the sea-rocks  
rude,

Call of the wind on Snowdon, scent of the Horner  
Wood !



## IDLE BARS

FAINTLY in the misty far-ness  
Ring the echoes in the roofs  
Of the lifting, jingling harness  
And the loud and trampling hoofs.  
Swift the fateful hour approaches  
When the final stage begins,  
And the last of all the coaches  
Leaves the last of all the inns.

Here and there a stout survivor  
Of the days of which we dream,  
Some old weather-beaten driver,  
Tools a lonely Lakeland team ;  
Jogs them down a humble by-way  
To the clacking of the bars,  
Threads the traffic of the highway,  
Derelict among the cars.

Youth that yearns for swift endeavour  
Scarce shall grieve for glory past,  
When the team 's unhooked for ever  
And the ribbons downward cast.  
Few shall weep that proudest pastime,  
For that music few shall mourn,  
When the great hills for the last time  
Thunder back the vibrant horn.

Yet some hearts shall catch and falter,  
Sad for days that drift and go,  
Faced with Fate no love can alter  
Nor regrets can overthrow ;  
And when Time has loosed the traces,  
And has dropped the coupling-rein,  
In a thousand silent places  
We shall hear the hoofs again.









